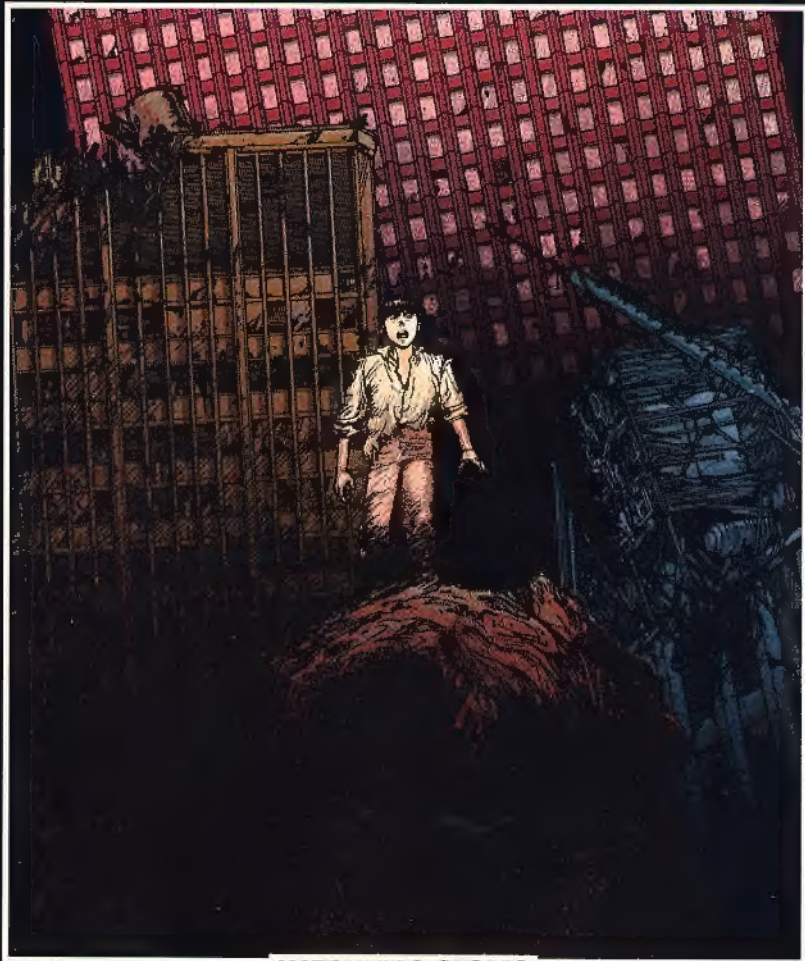


AKIRA 1

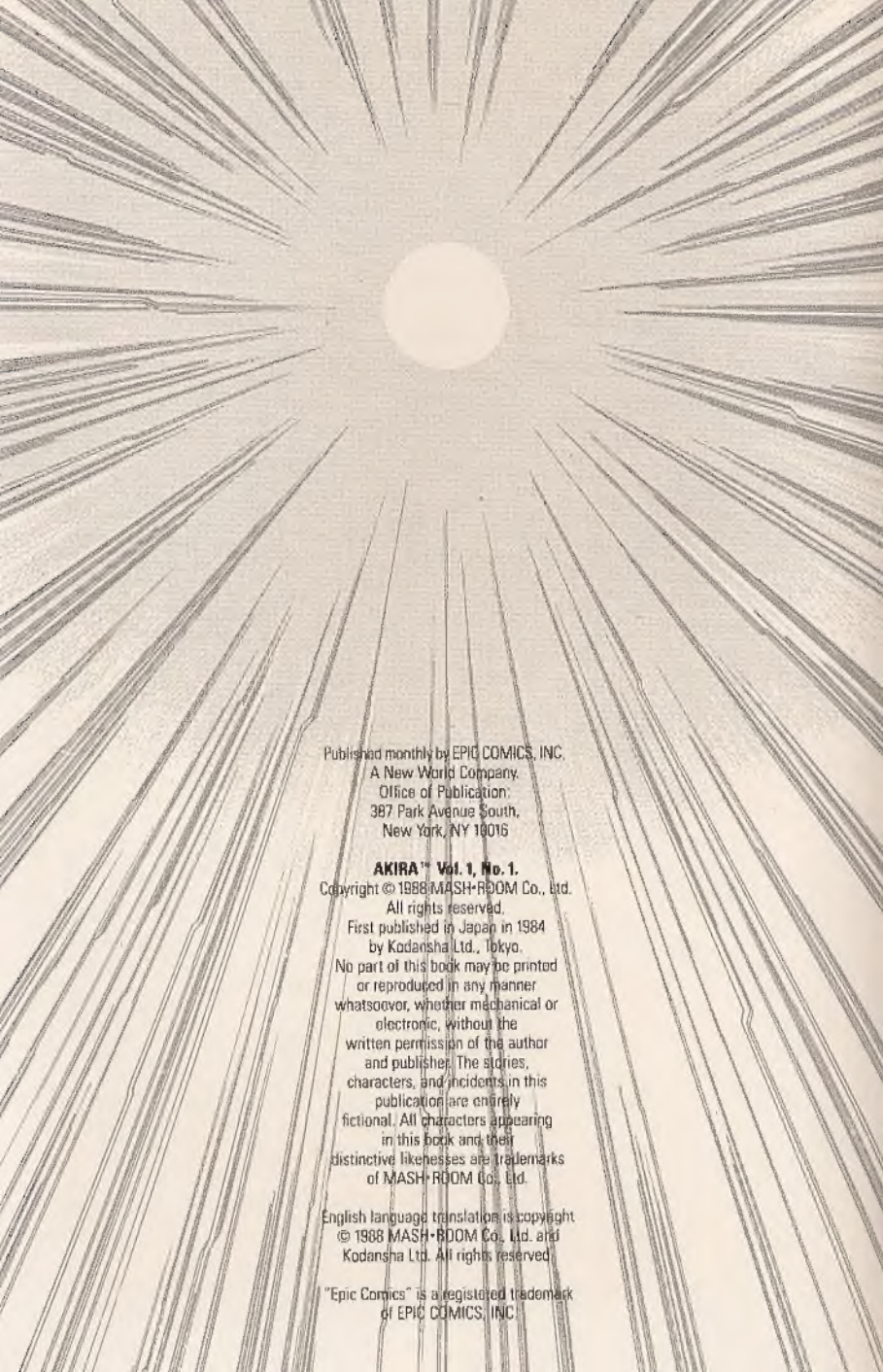
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KATSUHIRO OTOMO



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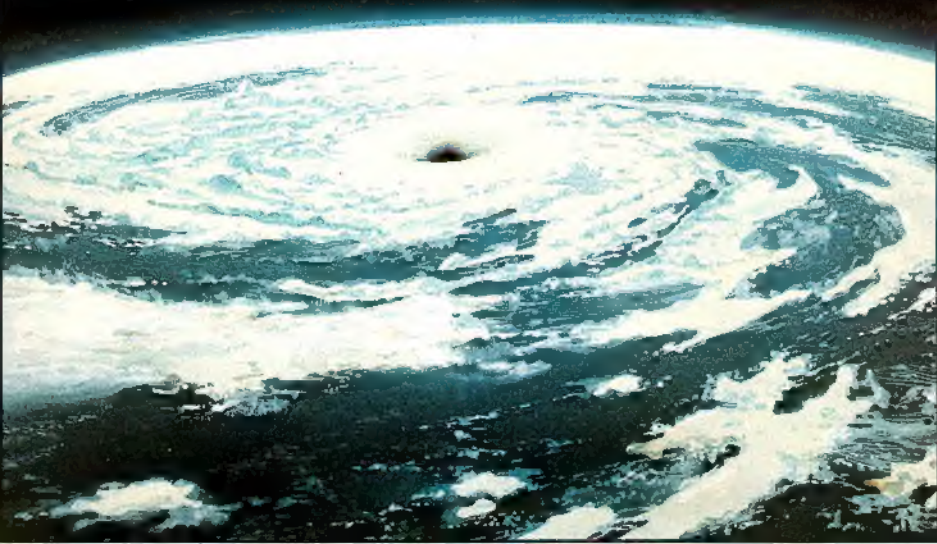
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At 2:17 PM
on December 6th,
1992,
a new type
of bomb
exploded
over the
metropolitan
area of
Japan.



AKIRA

BY KATSUHIRO OTOMO

Chapter 1

THE HIGHWAY



Nine hours later,
World War III began.

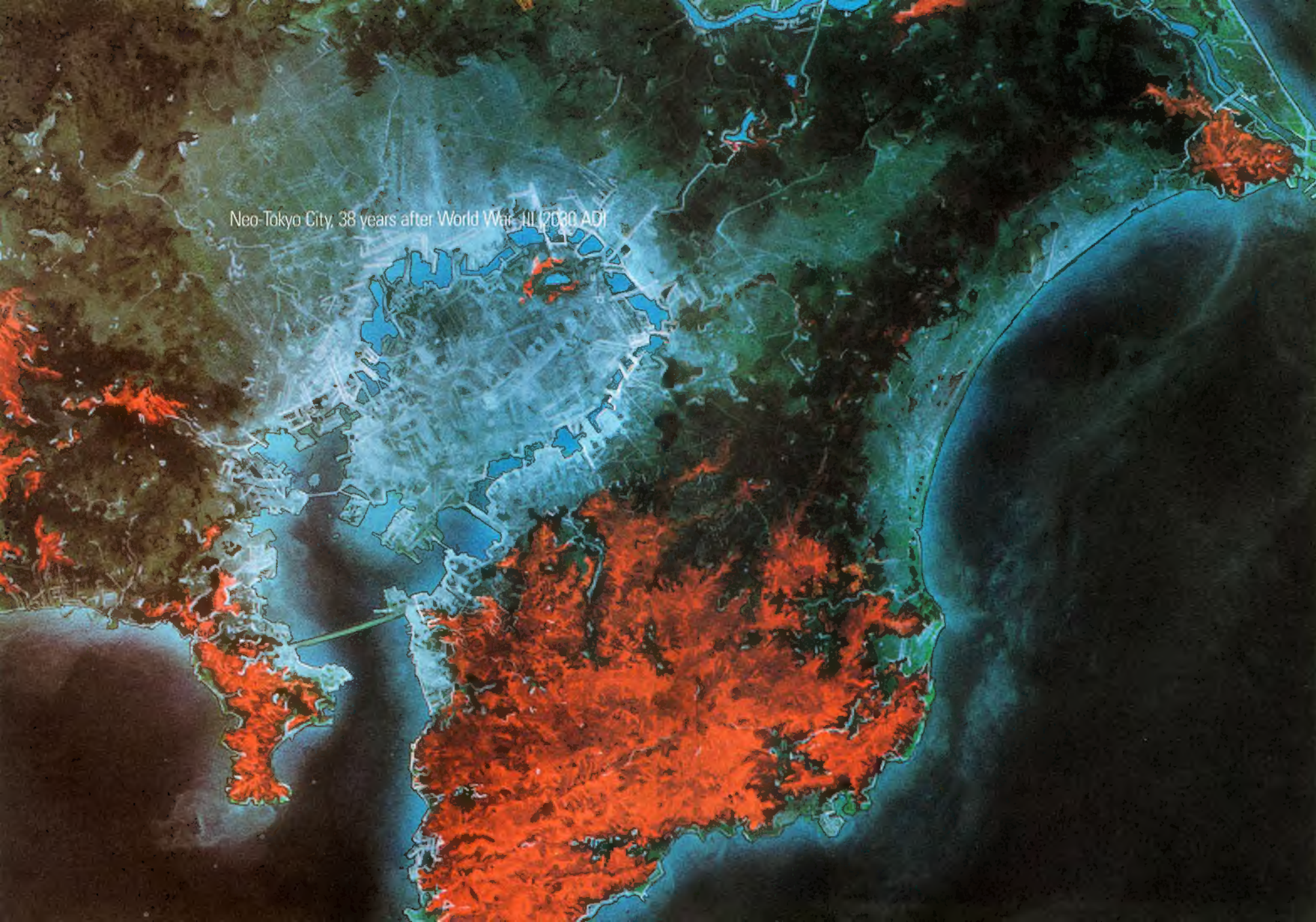
Leningrad, Moscow,
Kazakhstan, Irkutsk,
Vladivostok, San Francisco,
Los Angeles, Washington, DC,
New York, Okinawa,
Berlin, Hamburg, Warsaw,
London, Birmingham
Paris, New Delhi...



And the world began
to rebuild.



Neo-Tokyo City, 38 years after World War III (2030 AD)





COME ON, YOU GUYS!
WE'RE GONNA TAKE
HIGHWAY 26 ALL THE WAY
OVER TO THE OLD CITY--
IF YOU THINK YOU CAN
KEEP UP!

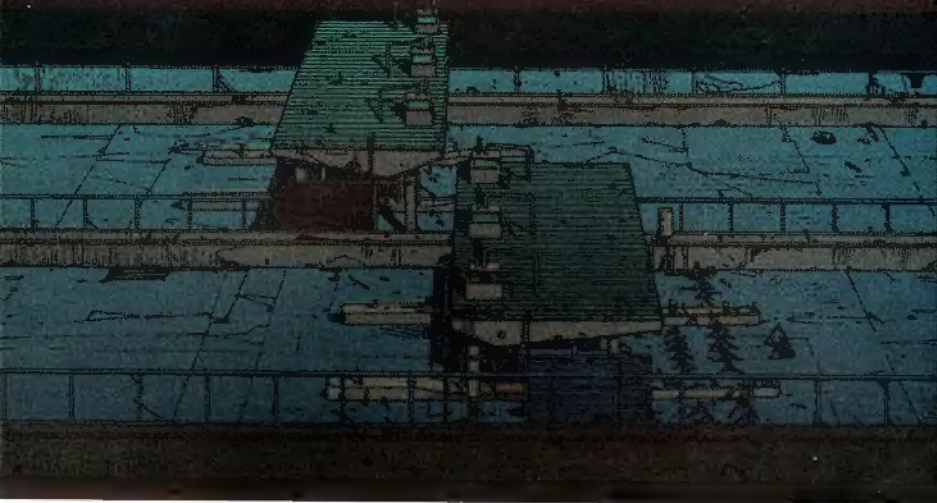


JUST LEAD
THE WAY, KANEDA.
WE'LL BE
RIGHT BEHIND
YOU.

STUDENTS AT THE YOUTH VOCATIONAL TRAINING SCHOOL, SOCIAL MISFITS WITH
TOO LITTLE TO FILL THEIR LIVES, KANEDA AND HIS FRIENDS FOLLOW THE WILD
PATH FROM THE CITY THAT STIFLES THEM...

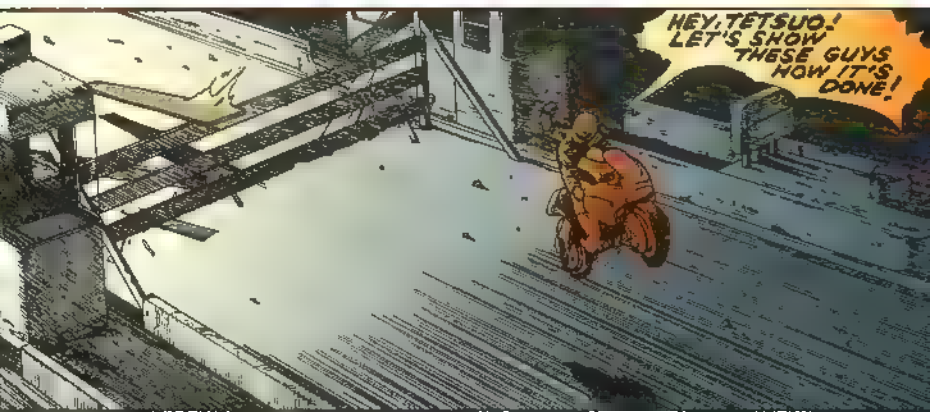


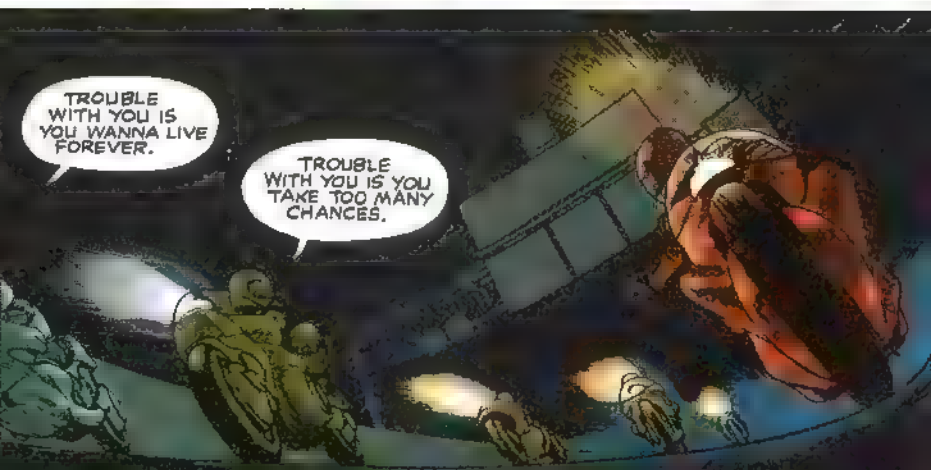
...TO A SCENE OF UTTER DESOLATION THAT WAS ONCE BURSTING WITH LIFE.

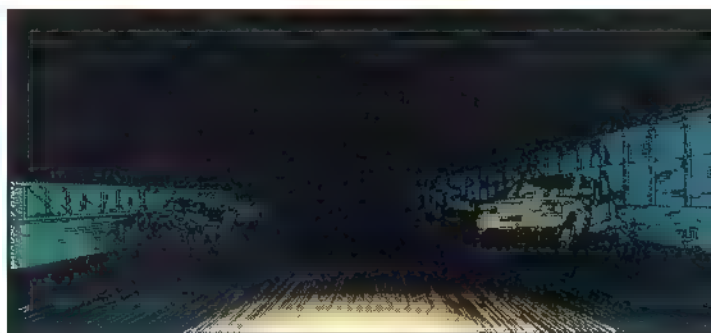


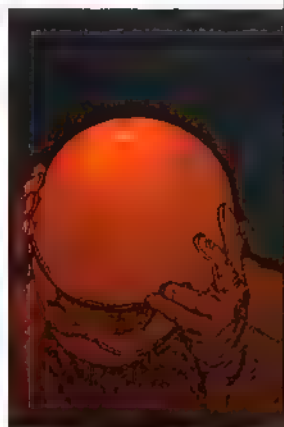
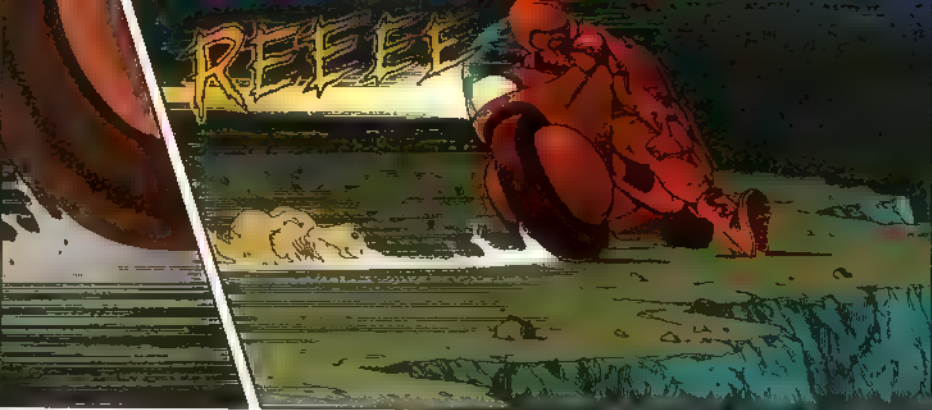


VRRRRNNNNN









The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a wall or a piece of fabric, with a mottled pattern of dark green, black, and brown. Three glowing speech bubbles are positioned on the left side of the image. The top bubble is white with black text. The middle bubble is white with black text. The bottom bubble is white with black text.

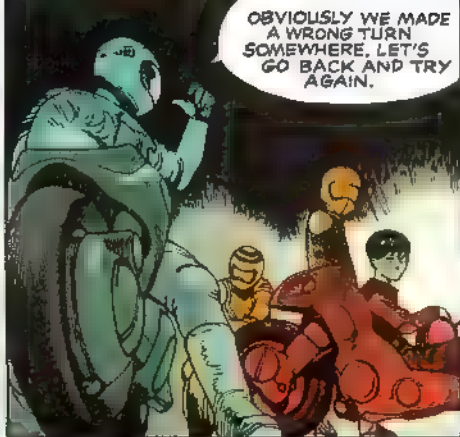
HEY,
WE WERE
JUST
GETTING
INTO IT...
WHY'D
WE
STOP?

'CAUSE
WE HIT
A DEAD
END,
DUMMY.
AND
I DO
MEAN
DEAD.

THIS
IS THE
HEART
OF ALL THE
DESTRUCTION.
WE'RE
RIGHT AT
THE PLACE
WHERE THE
BOMB
FELL.



MAN, IT GIVES ME THE CREEPS THINKING OF ALL THE PEOPLE THAT DIED HERE



OBTUSIOUSLY WE MADE A WRONG TURN SOMEWHERE. LET'S GO BACK AND TRY AGAIN.



WHAT'S THE BIG HURRY? YOU SCARED OF THE DARK, OR WHAT?



THERE'LL BE SOME CHANGES MADE HERE, PRETTY SOON. I HEAR THIS IS WHERE THEY WANT TO HOLD NEXT YEAR'S OLYMPICS.

YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?



THAT'S WHAT I HEARD... TELL HIM, TETSUO.

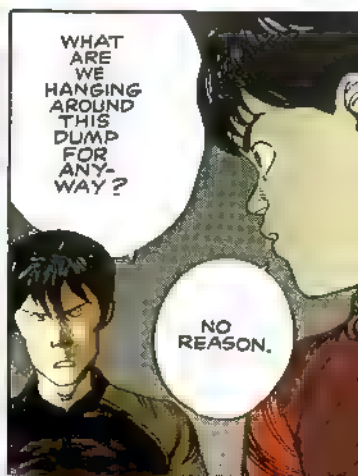


ME--?



IT'S THE TRUTH, KANEDA.

THEY ALREADY STARTED WORK ON IT. A BUNCH OF OLD BUILDINGS AND STUFF HAVE BEEN TORN DOWN AND EVERYTHING.

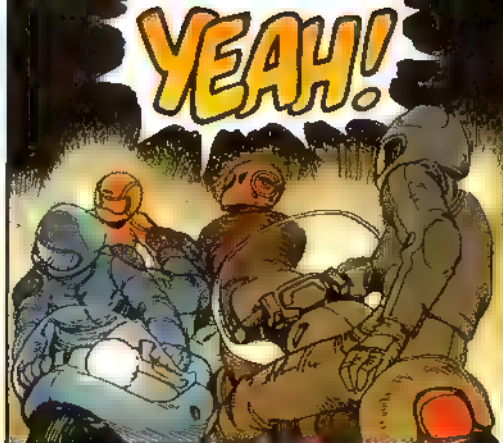


WHAT ARE WE HANGING AROUND THIS DUMP FOR ANYWAY?

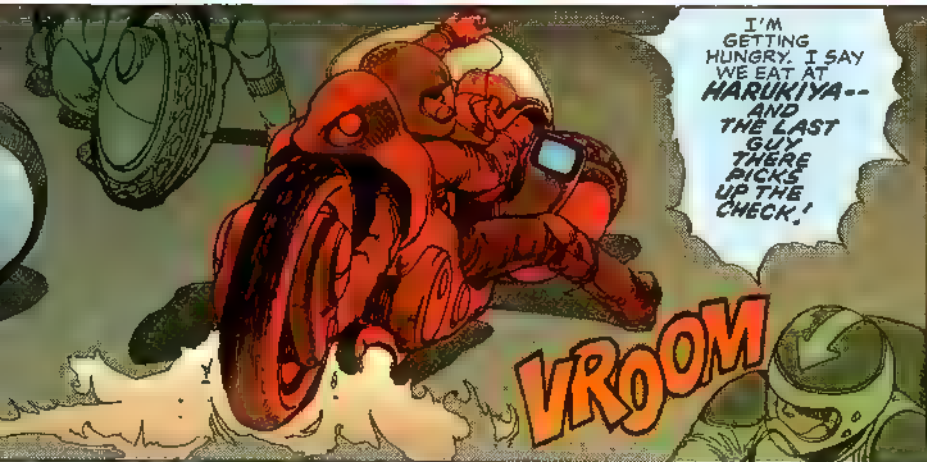
NO REASON.



COME
ON!
WE'RE
OUTTA
HERE!

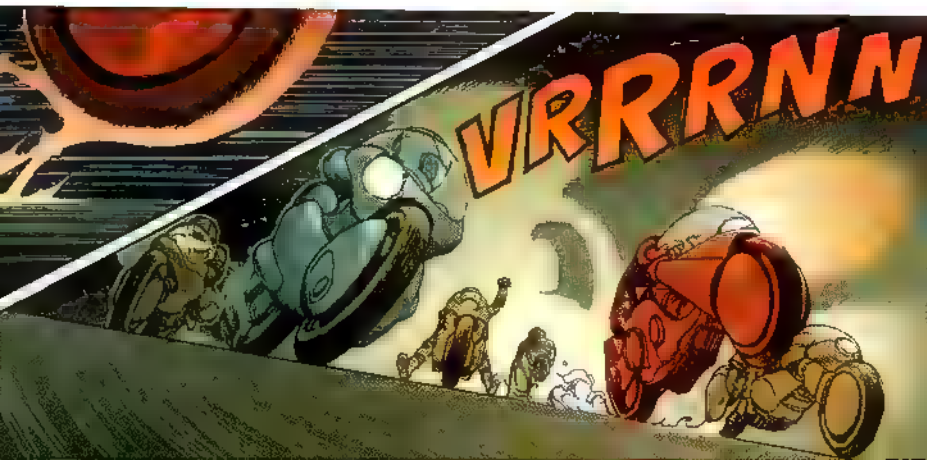


YEAH!



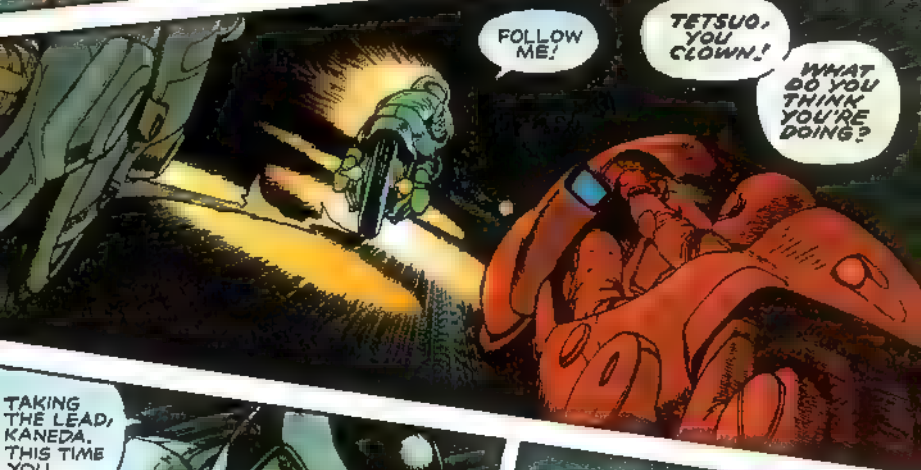
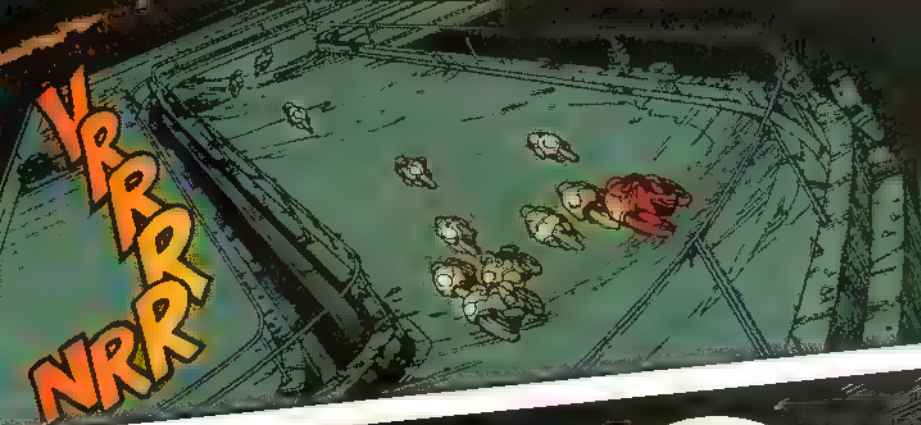
I'M
GETTING
HUNGRY. I SAY
WE EAT AT
HARUKIYA--
AND
THE LAST
GUY
THERE
PICKS
UP THE
CHECK!

VROOM



VRRRNN

Y
R
R
R
N
R
R

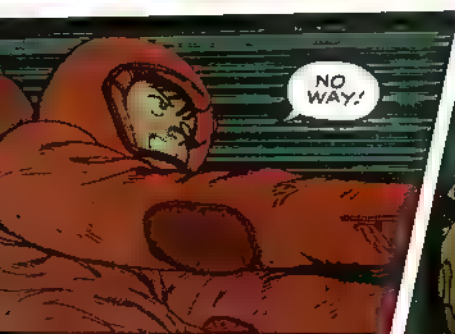


FOLLOW
ME!

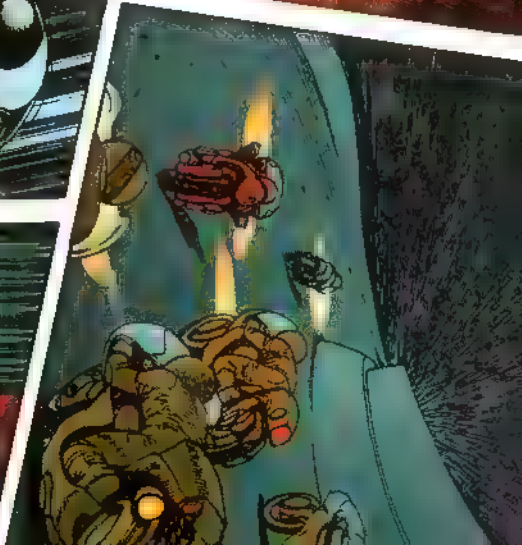
TETSUO,
YOU
CLOWN!

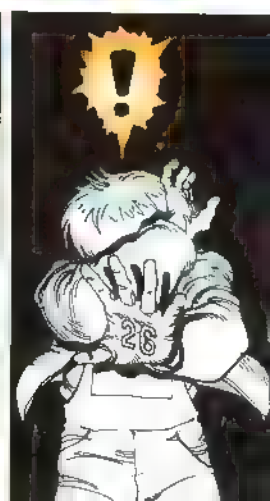
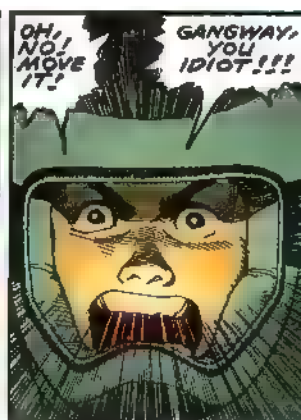
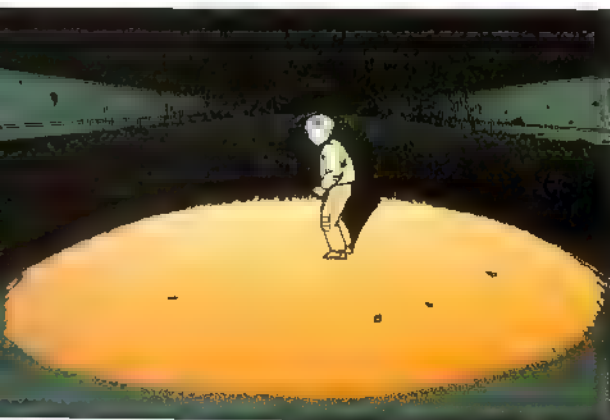
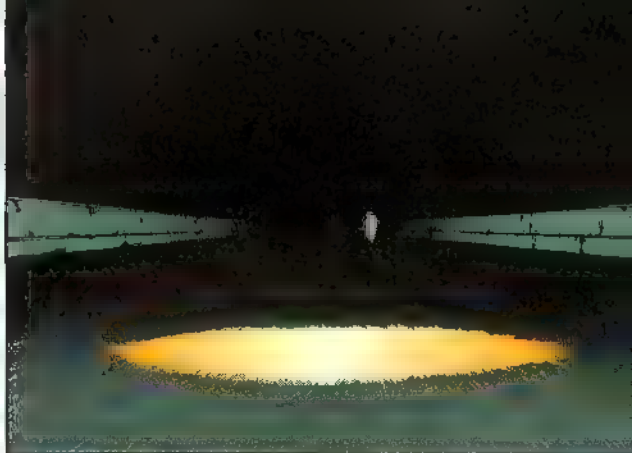
WHAT
DO YOU
THINK
YOU'RE
DOING?

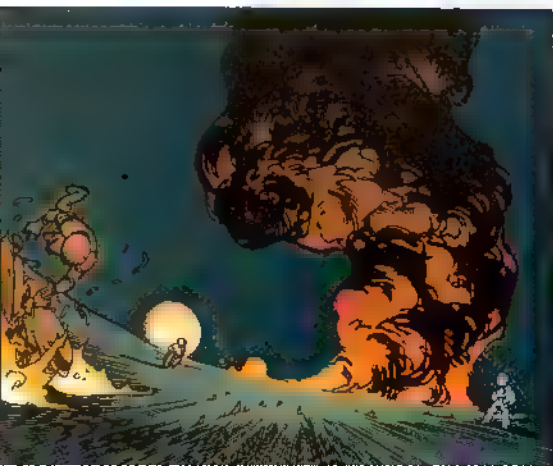
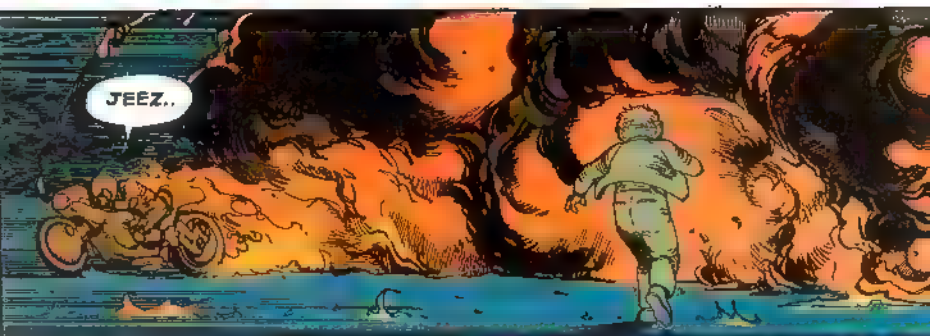
TAKING
THE LEAD,
KANEDA.
THIS TIME
YOU
FOLLOW
ME.

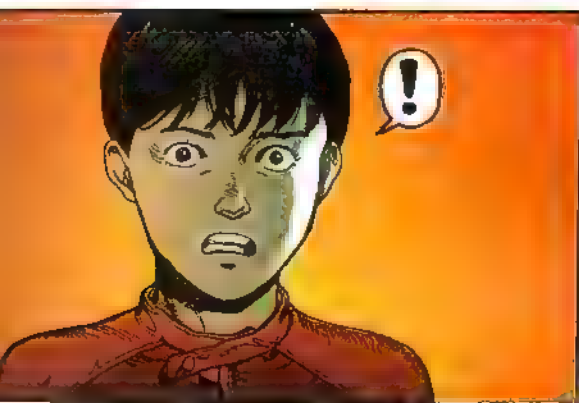


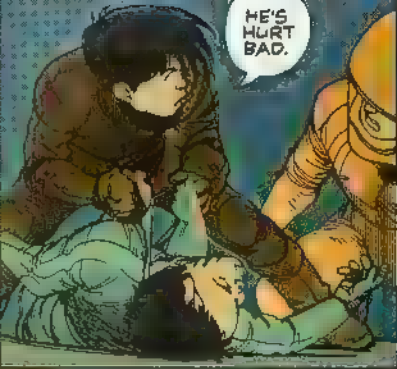
NO
WAY!

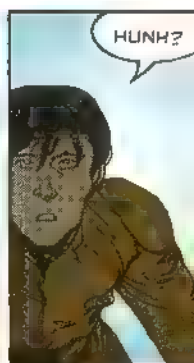








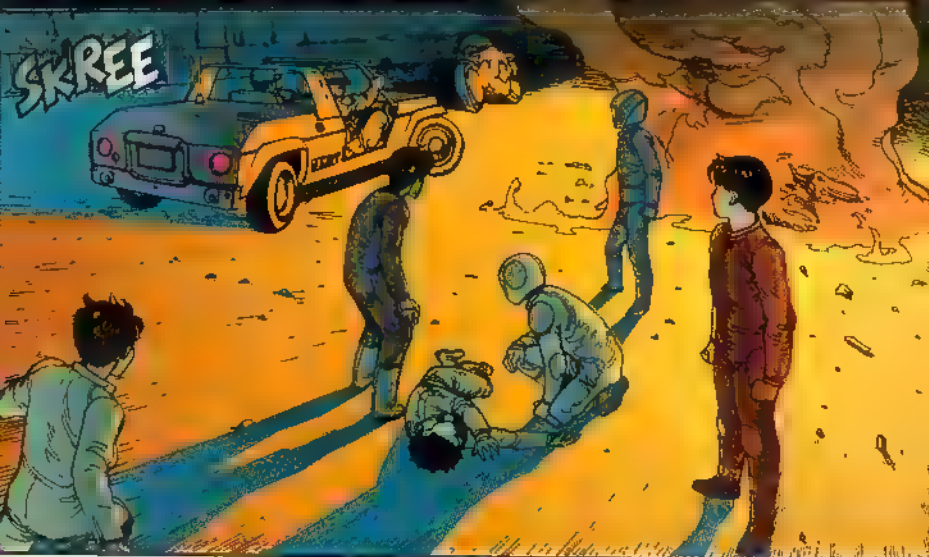




COPS--?

SOLDIERS--?

MAYBE
THEY CAN
HELP...



NOPE. THERE'S
NO SIGN OF... IT WAS
JUST A BUNCH OF
KIDS. THERE WAS
SOME KIND OF
ACCIDENT.

YES,
SIR.

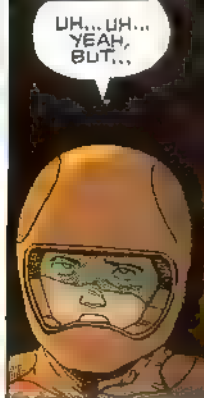




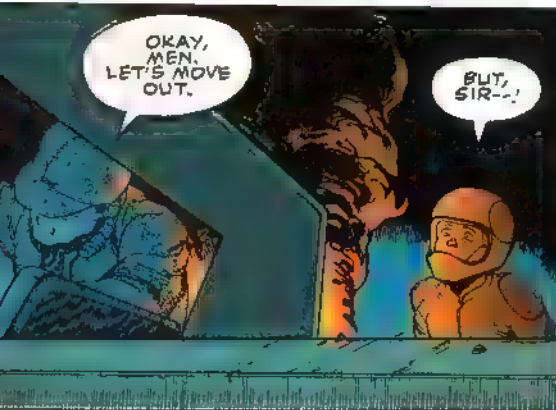
UM...
SIR ?
EXCUSE
ME,
BUT--!



YOU SHOULDN'T
HAVE COME
HERE. THIS IS A
RESTRICTED
AREA.



UH...UH...
YEAH,
BUT..



OKAY,
MEN.
LET'S MOVE
OUT.

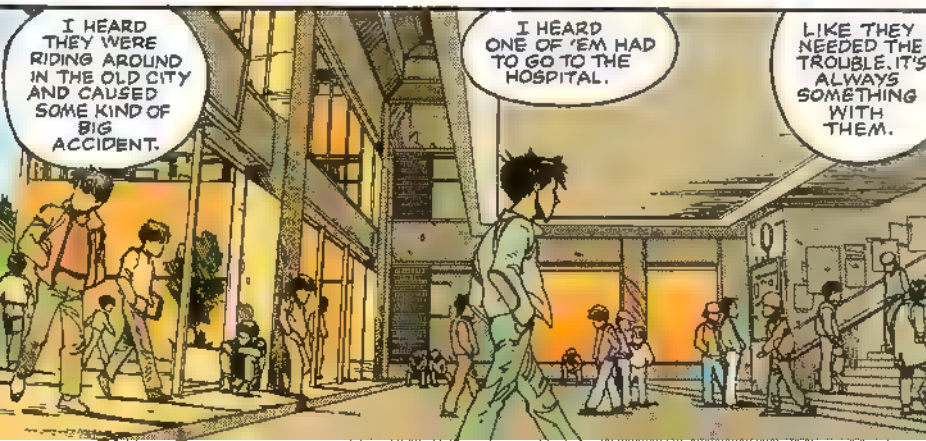
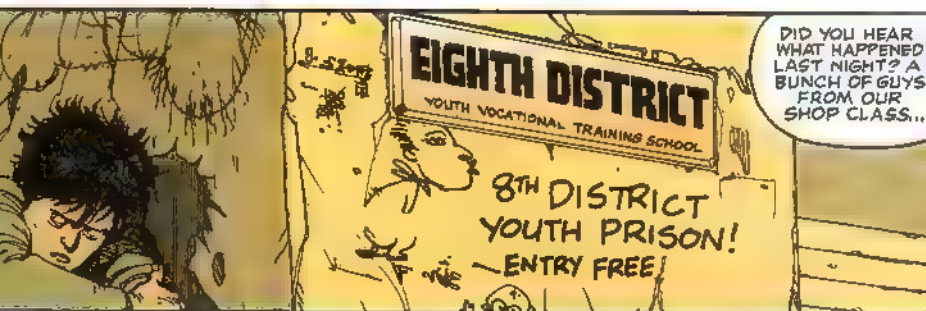
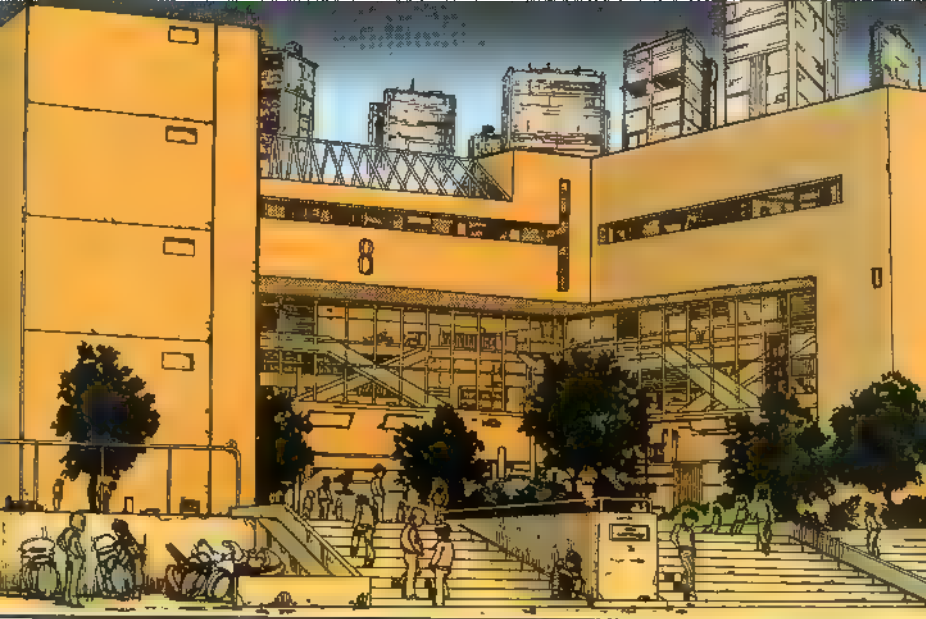
BUT,
SIR--!

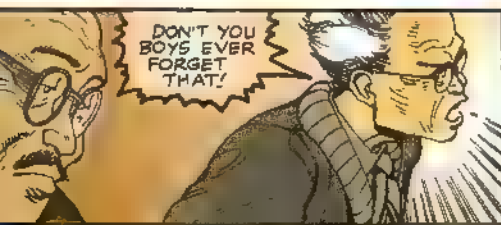
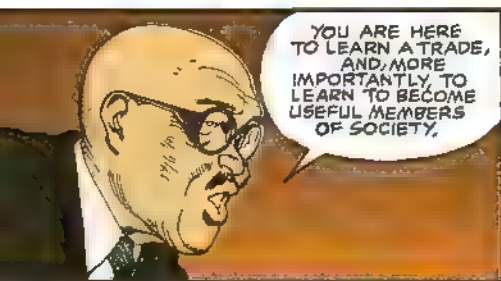
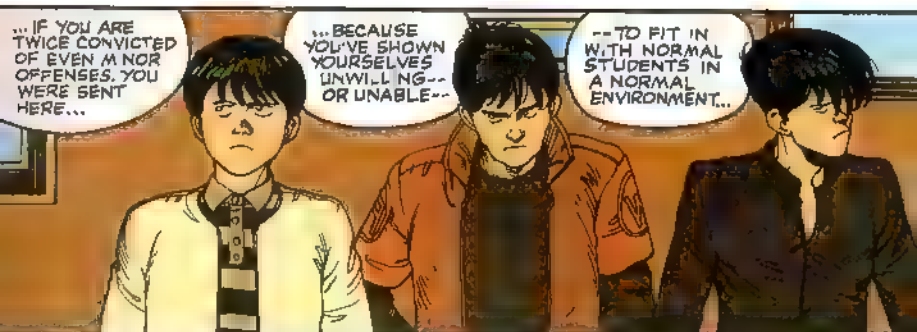


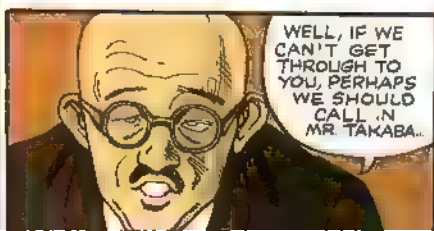
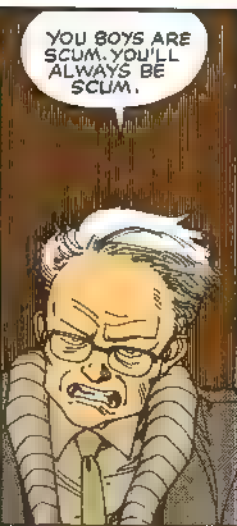
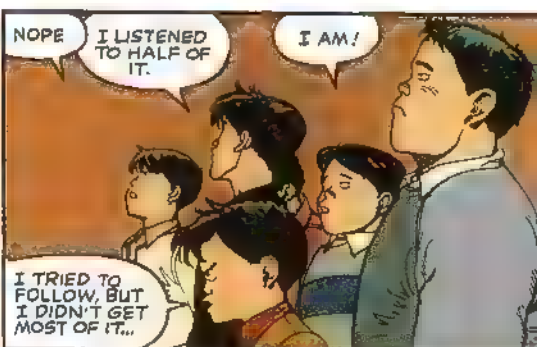
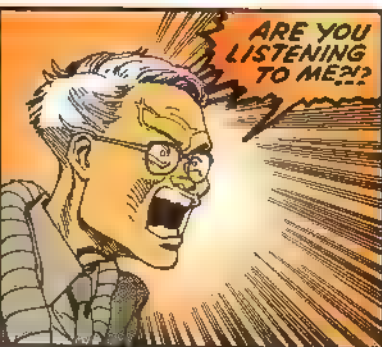
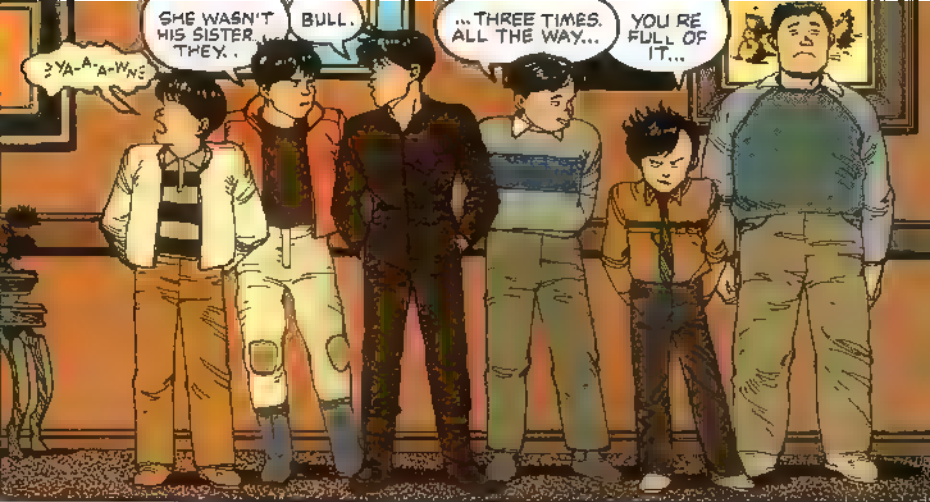
AN
AMBULANCE IS
ON ITS WAY. JUST
SIT TIGHT.

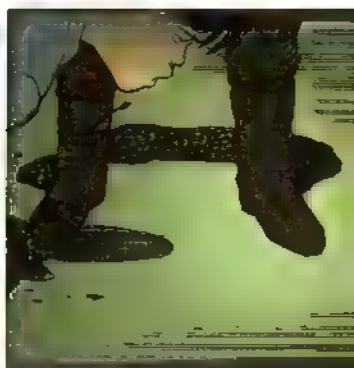
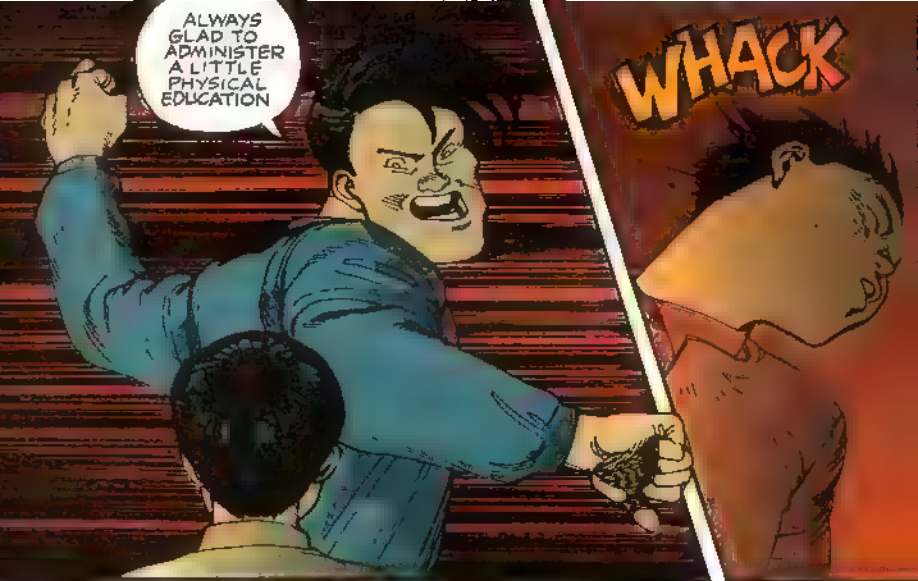
WHEN THE
POLICE GET
HERE, TELL
THEM HOW IT
HAPPENED.

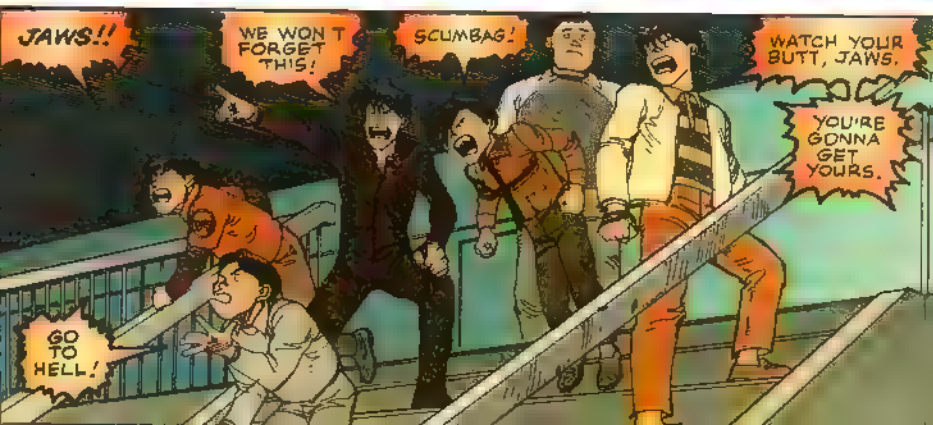
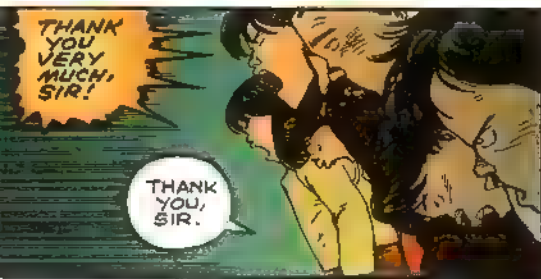
BUT...
BUT AREN'T
YOU--?













DON'T LET THEM SCARE YOU. WE DON'T HAVE A THING TO WORRY ABOUT.

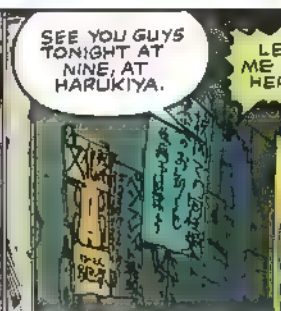


WE HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING THEY CAN TAKE US TO COURT FOR.



HEY! WHO LET A WOMAN IN HERE?

H'LO.



SEE YOU GUYS TONIGHT AT NINE, AT HARUKIYA.

LET ME AT HER.



DON'T FORGET, WE HAVE TO FIND OUT WHAT HOSPITAL TETSUO'S IN SO WE CAN VISIT HIM

OKAY.

THE EIGHTH DISTRICT TRADE FAIR WILL BE HELD ON THE FOURTH OF NEXT MONTH. WE EXPECT REPRESENTATIVES FROM SEVERAL FACTORIES TO ATTEND, AS WELL AS YOUR PARENTS.

REMEMBER, THIS WILL BE AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW OFF YOUR OWN WORK...

ALUMN OF THIS SCHOOL WHO NOW WORK FOR MAJOR CORPORATIONS WILL ALSO BE COMING...

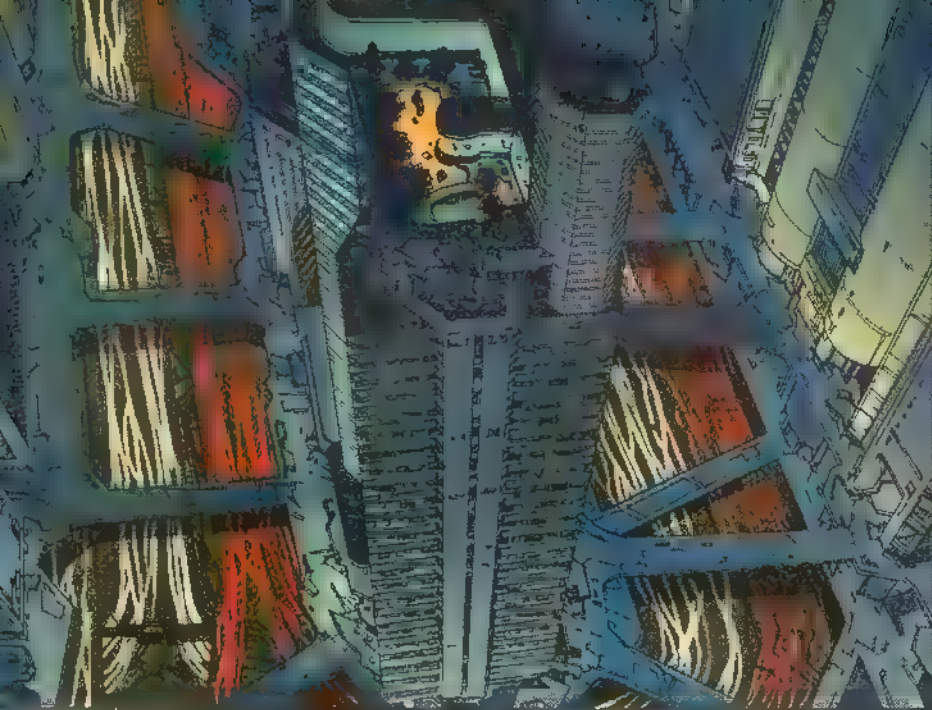


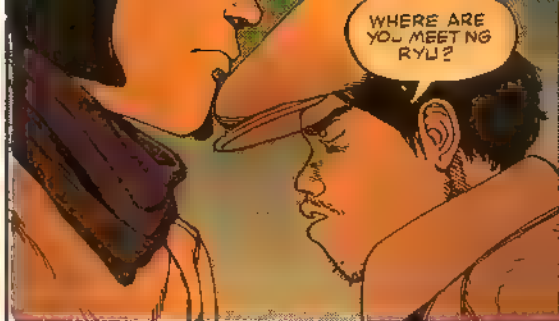
YOU WANNA DIE?

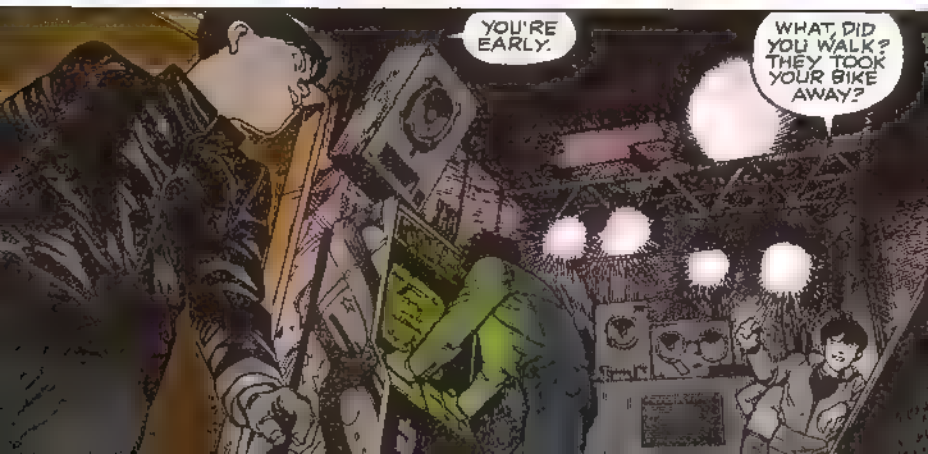
YOU CALL THIS MONEY? I CALL IT AN INSULT!

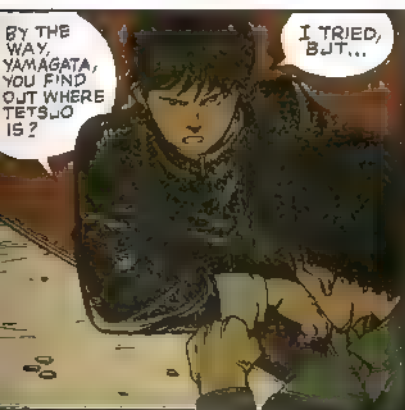
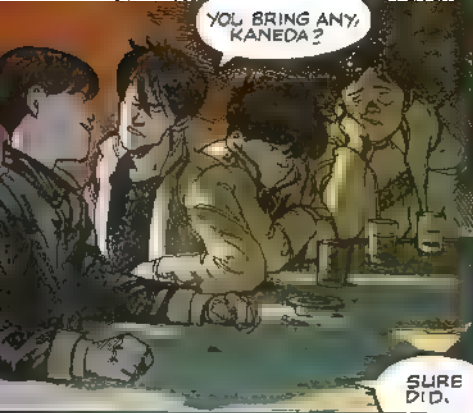
THIS GUY'S BLEEDING

YEAH...

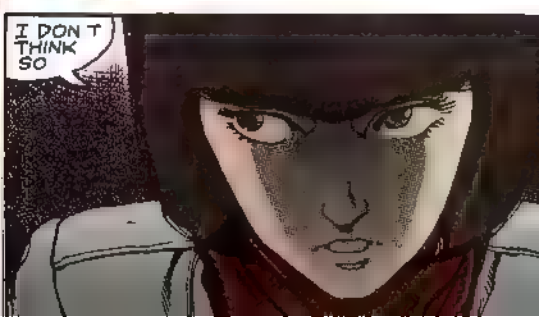














KANEDA,
DON'T!

QUIT
WORRYING.



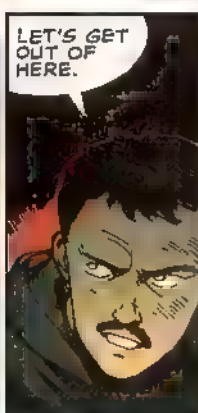
THERE ARE
MORE POLICE
PATROLLING
THE CITY.



SHH...



WHY WASTE YOUR TIME
ON THE OLDER GENERATION?
I WANT TO TALK
TO YOU.



LET'S GET
OUT OF
HERE.



LET'S.



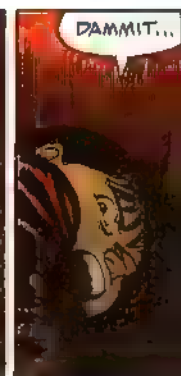
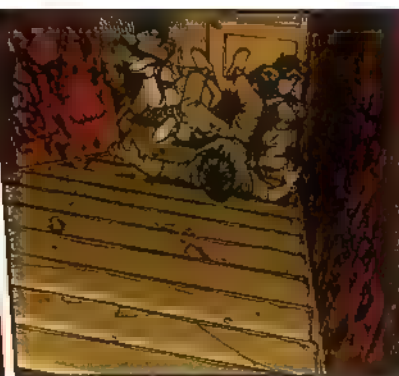
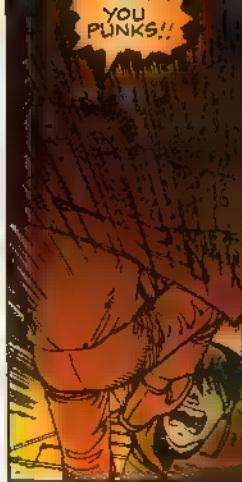
WAIT A MINUTE
I'M TALKING
TO HER.

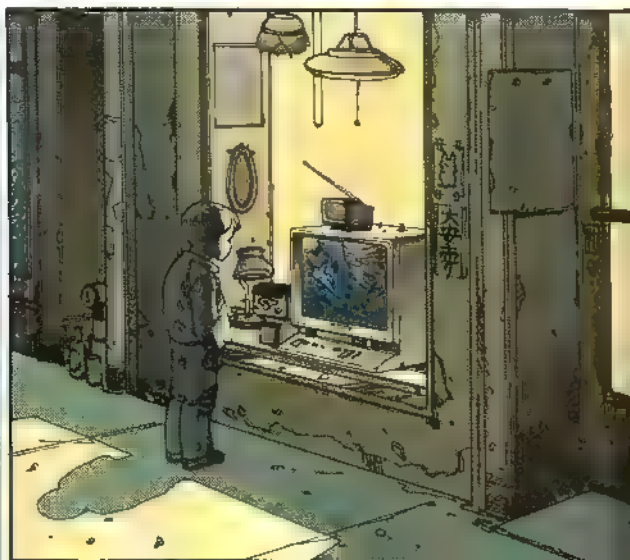


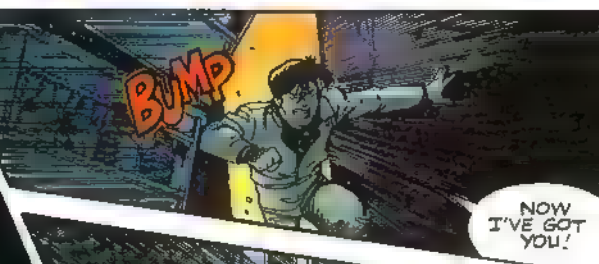
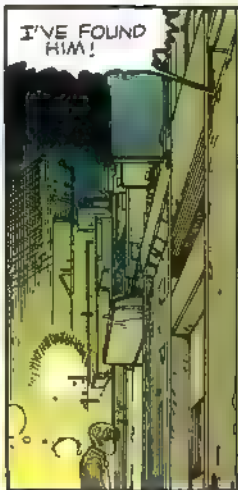
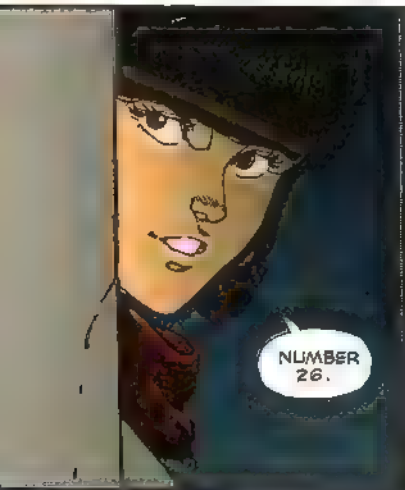
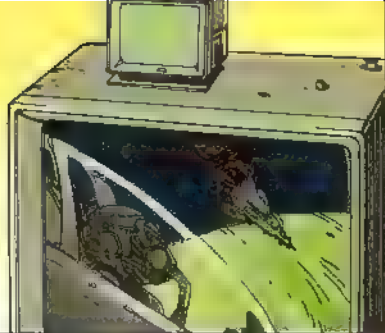
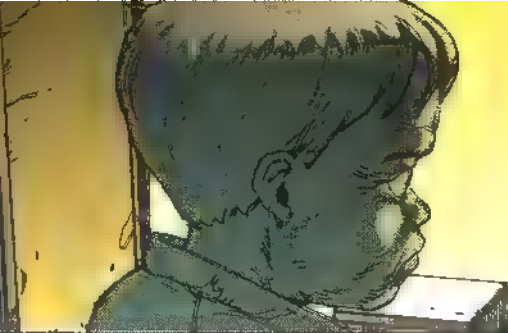
WOK



SLAM









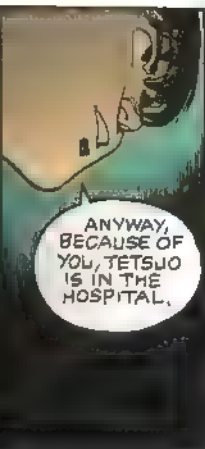
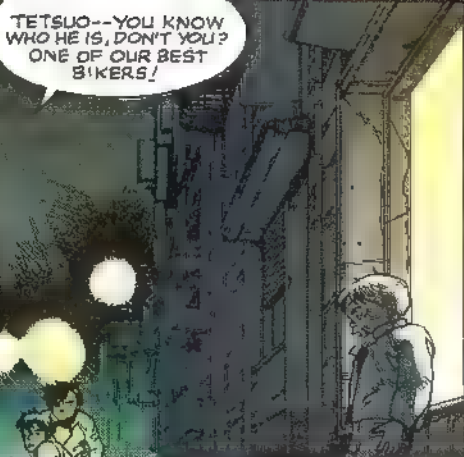


KANEDA...?



BECAUSE
OF YOU...

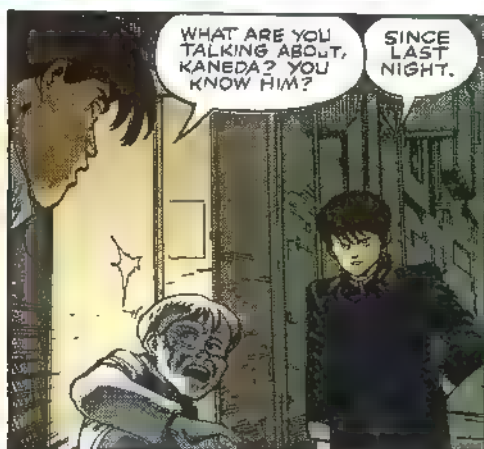
TETSUO--YOU KNOW
WHO HE IS, DON'T YOU?
ONE OF OUR BEST
BIKERS!



ANYWAY,
BECAUSE OF
YOU, TETSUO
IS IN THE
HOSPITAL.

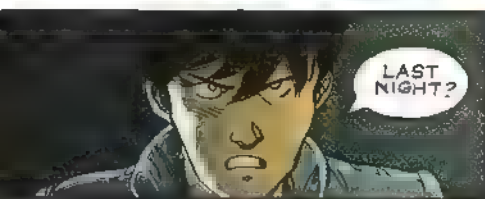


HE'S MY FRIEND, SO
I OWE YOU FOR
WHAT YOU DID TO
HIM. AND I'M
GONNA PAY YOU
BACK, RIGHT
NOW.

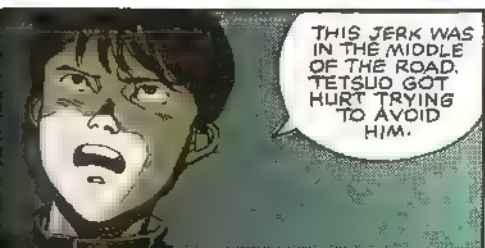


WHAT ARE YOU
TALKING ABOUT,
KANEDA? YOU
KNOW HIM?

SINCE
LAST
NIGHT.



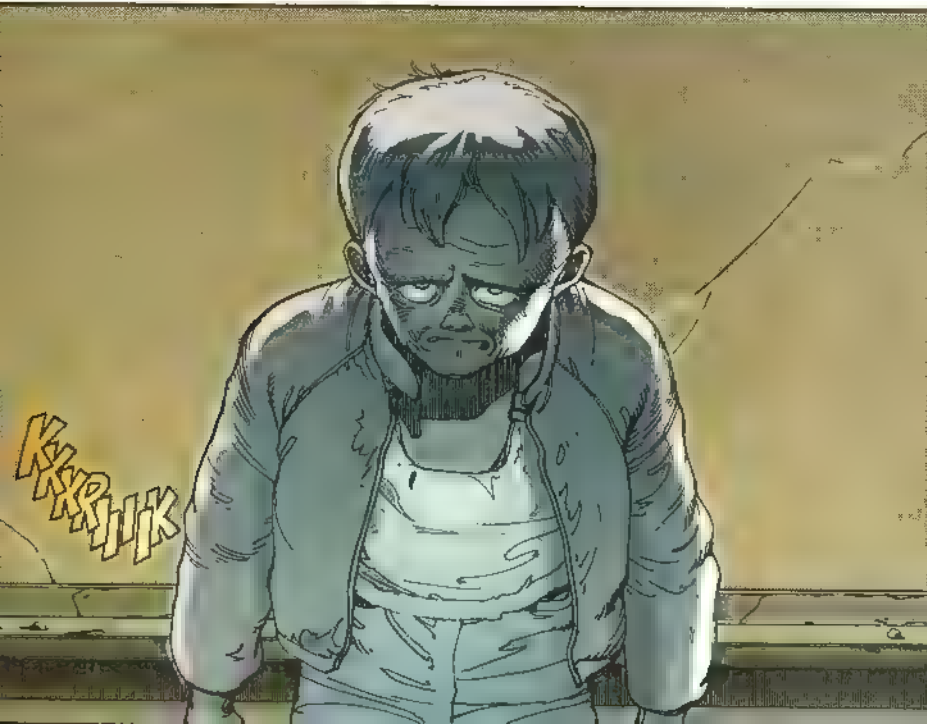
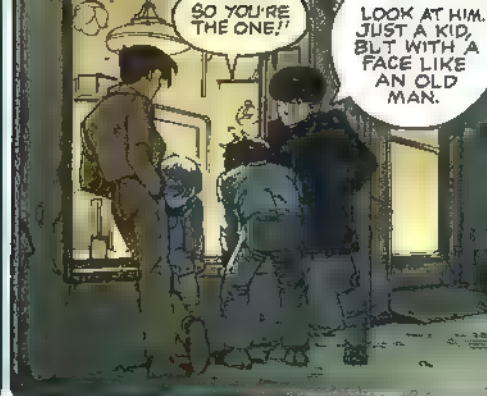
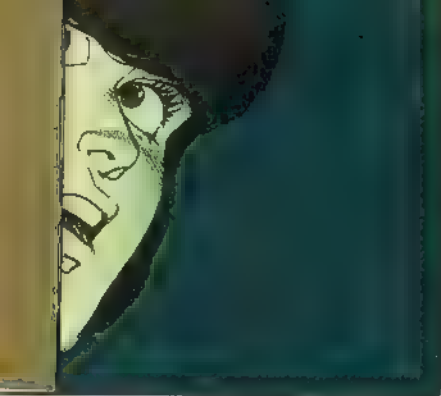
LAST
NIGHT?



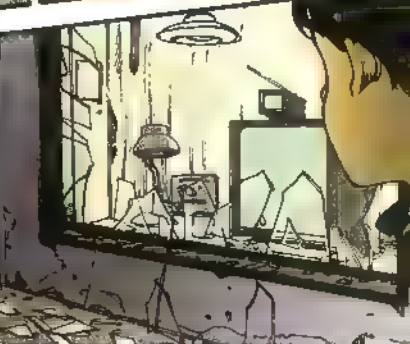
THIS JERK WAS
IN THE MIDDLE
OF THE ROAD.
TETSUO GOT
HURT TRYING
TO AVOID
HIM.



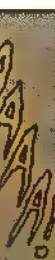
WHAT--?!

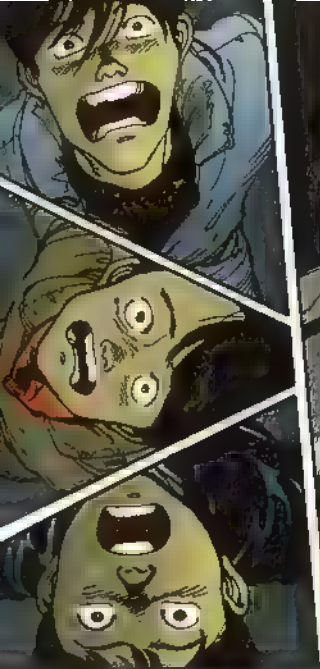


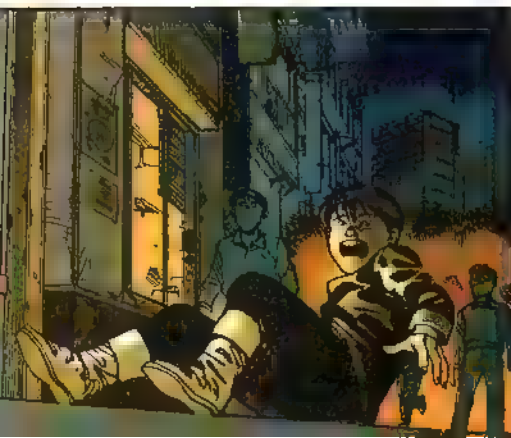





THE
G.R.L.,
THE ONE
FROM
HARUKIYA.










LOOK!
SMOKE AT
9 O'CLOCK!



LOOKS LIKE IT'S
IN THE SEVENTEENTH
DISTRICT.

EMERGENCY!
EMERGENCY!



THIS IS *STF 14*.
WE'VE SPOTTED
A FIRE IN THE
SEVENTEENTH
DISTRICT.

MAYBE
CAUSED BY AN
EXPLOSION.

WE'RE
GOING IN TO
TAKE A
LOOK.

AN EXPLOSION?!

IN THE SEVENTEENTH DISTRICT?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

ONE OF OUR PATROLS IS ON ITS WAY.

WE'LL HAVE THE DETAILS SOON ENOUGH.

DO YOU THINK NUMBER 26 WAS BEHIND IT?

IT'S BEEN OVER THIRTY HOURS SINCE HE ESCAPED

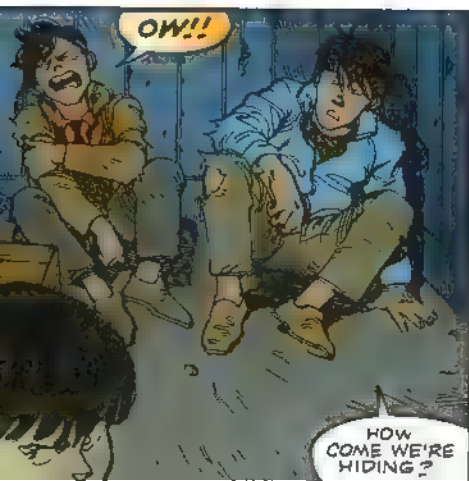
SOON HE'LL BE AT CRITICAL



MOVE ALONG,
FOLKS. MOVE
ALONG. NOTHING
TO SEE HERE.



HEY!



OW!!

HOW
COME WE'RE
HIDING?



STUPID! YOU
KNOW WHAT'LL
HAPPEN IF WE
GET BUSTED
AGAIN SO SOON
AFTER LAST
NIGHT?!

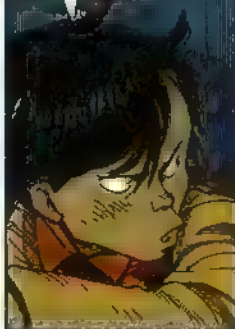


IF WE SAY WE
DIDN'T DO
ANYTH NG AND
IT WASN'T OUR
FAULT, NO ONE
WILL BELIEVE
US.

BEING A J.D.
IS A REAL
PAIN IN THE
ASS.



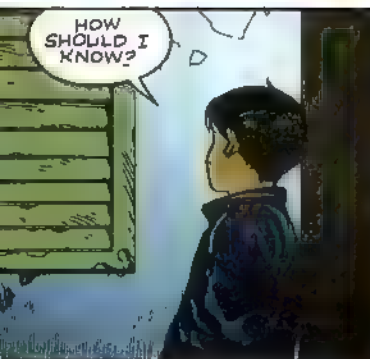
WHAT'S THE
STORY WITH
THAT LITTLE
WEIRDO?



WHAT DO
YOU THINK,
KANEDA? DID
HE REALLY
DESTROY THE
WINDOW AND
THE WATER
TOWER?



HOW
SHOULD I
KNOW?



THE
WATER
TOWER,
TOO?



DID YOU
THINK IT WAS
JUST A
COINCIDENCE?



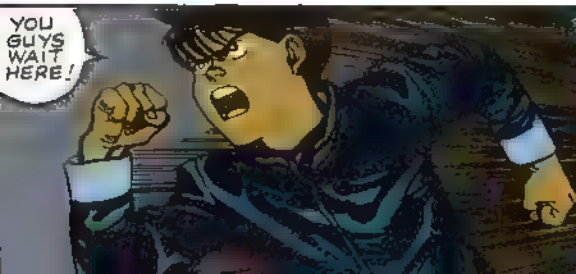
WAIT A
MINUTE--
THAT
GIRL!



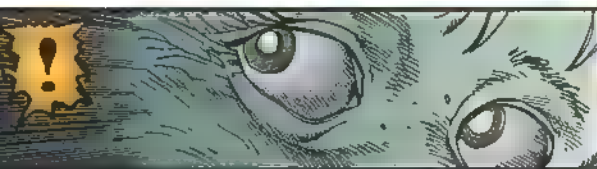
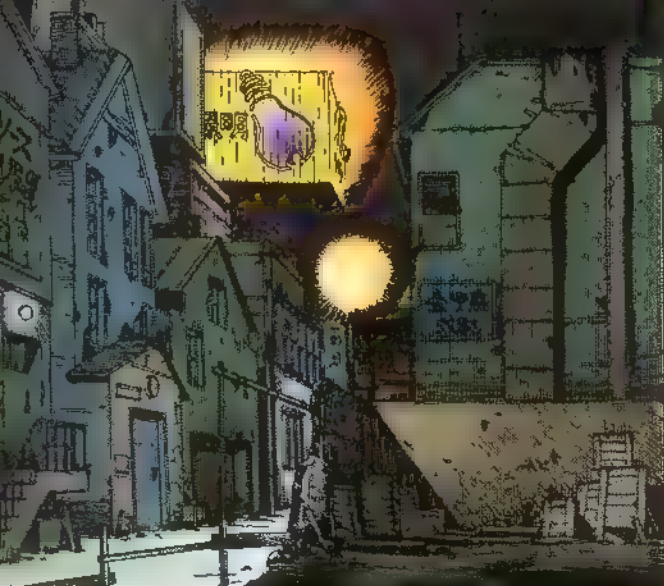
I BET
SHE
KNOWS!

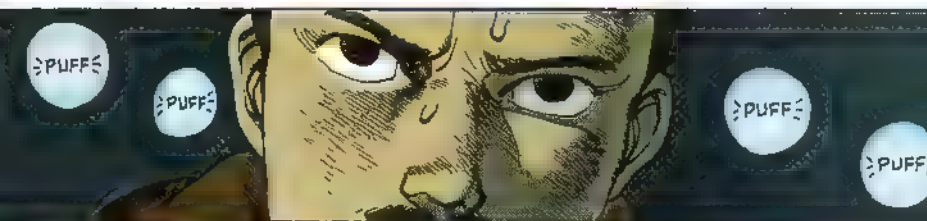


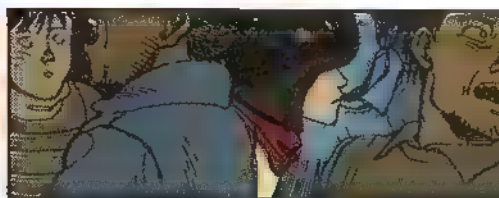
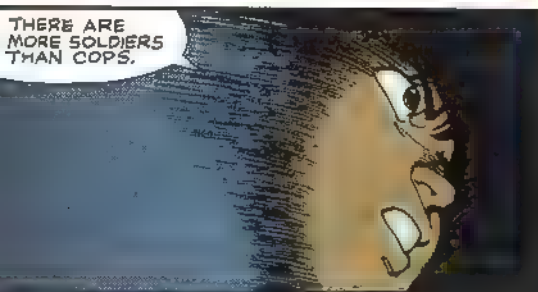
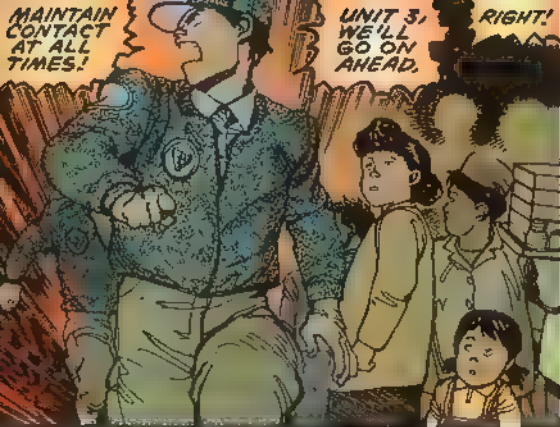
YOU
GUYS
WAIT
HERE!

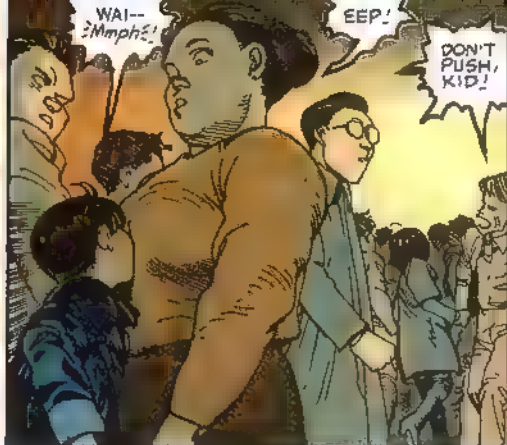
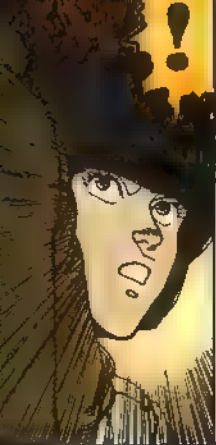


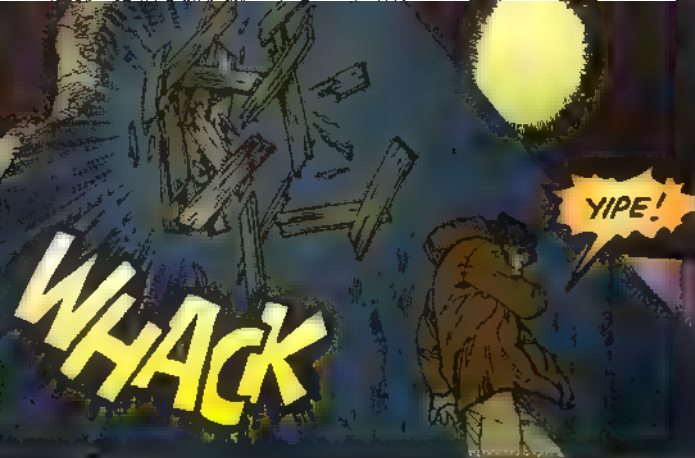
HEY!!
COME BACK
HERE!





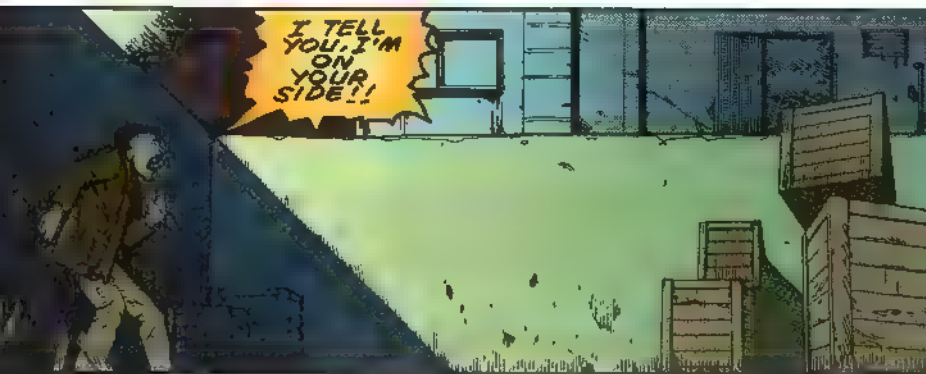




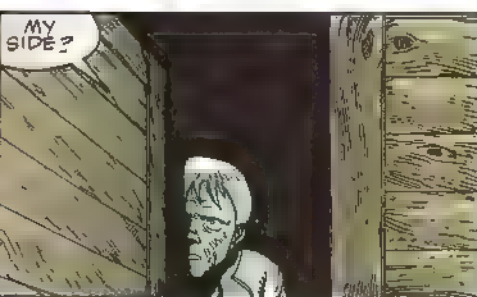


YIPE!

STOP IT! JUST COOL OFF, WOULD YOU?



I TELL YOU, I'M ON YOUR SIDE!!



MY SIDE?



MY ORGANIZATION ARE THE ONES WHO GOT YOU OUT!



TRUST ME, I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU.

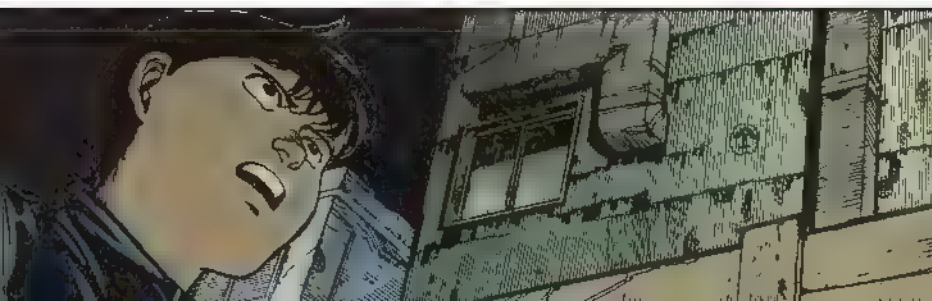
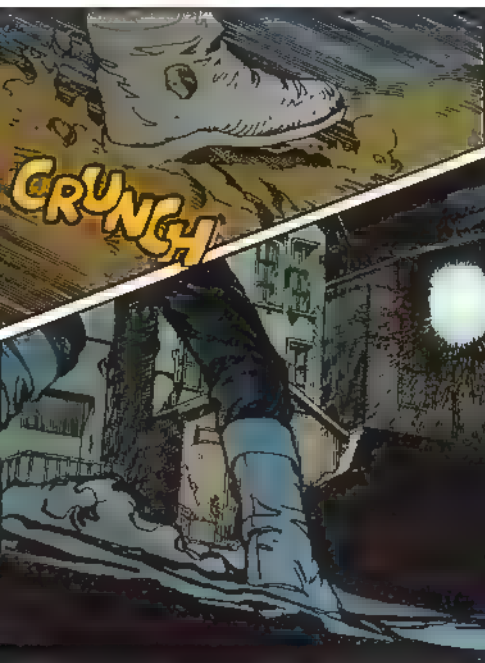
YOU'RE NOT SAFE
HERE. THE AREA'S
SWARMING WITH
PEOPLE WHO'RE
AFTER YOU.



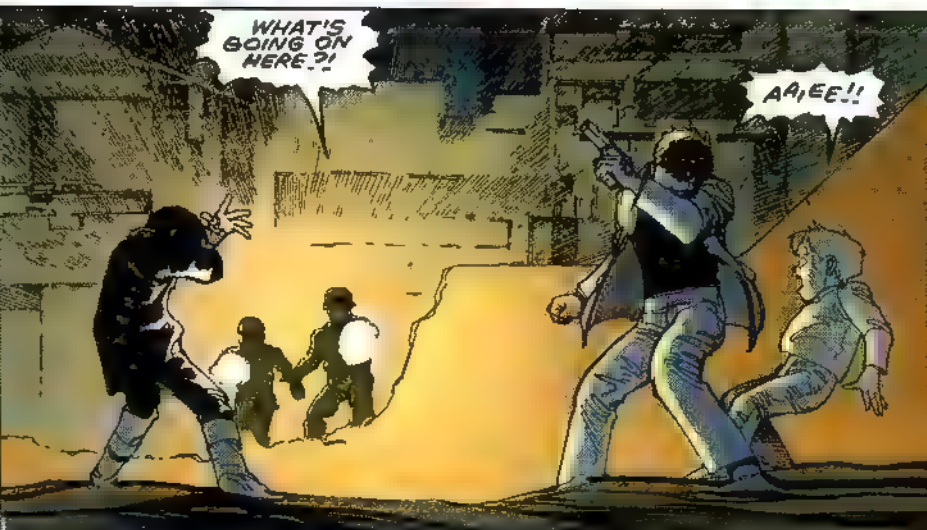
ARE
THEY
WEARING
WHITE
COATS??



YES, AND
THERE
ARE A
LOT OF
THEM.







AKIRA & OTOMO

In 1970, Japan's comic magazine industry was divided roughly into two types of publications. One was for juvenile readers, from children up to middle teens. The other was for an adult audience consisting mainly of young salaried workers.

Kodansha, Ltd., one of the country's largest publishers, felt that there was an intermediate group being missed: high school and college students, a readership sensitive to new trends developing in film, music, fashion, all forms of the arts and entertainment.

Young Magazine, a 300 page biweekly, was designed for this potential audience. But finding exactly the right material to capture the imagination of a new readership proved difficult. For two years **Young Magazine** struggled. During this time, it attracted the interest of artist-writer **Katsuhiro Otomo**.

Since the publication of his first work in 1973—adapting the short novel **Mateo Falcone** by **Prosper Merimee**—Otomo's reputation had steadily grown, based on a number of unique and intense comics short stories (20 to 30 pages in length rather than the hundreds, sometimes thousands, that an ongoing saga can run in Japanese comics). Some of these dealt

with fantasy and science-fiction themes, many with slice-of-life contemporary drama; all had a visual spirit and rhythm that reflected Otomo's feelings for new wave cinema and modern jazz.

With the publication of **Domu** in 1983, Otomo enjoyed his greatest success. This 230 page comic—which centers upon a conflict between two dwellers in a modern day high rise apartment complex, an old man and young girl, each possessing deadly psychic powers—became a best seller and went on to win Japan's science-fiction Grand Prix for story of the year (previously this prize had only been awarded to novels).

The success of **Domu** and reactions to an earlier work—the still to be completed series, **Fireball**—dealing with a human versus mega-computer theme, led Otomo to consider doing an even larger scale science-fiction story.

The story was **Akira**. And because he liked the new direction it was taking, **Young Magazine** was where Otomo chose to present this major work, which, when complete, would be a six volume graphic novel.

Reader reaction to the first 25 page segment of the series to appear in **Young Magazine** was overwhelming. The material broke with tradition and touched a nerve. Circulation began to rise. The new audience had been found. Today there are about half a dozen titles like **Young Magazine**. **Young Magazine** and two others have a circulation of over one million.

Traditionally in Japan, a

comics series first appears in installments in a weekly or biweekly magazine. When sufficient material has been published, the series is then collected into a book edition. Usually this would be about 240 pages and in a format that is a little bit larger but still similar in size to an American paperback book. Here too, **Akira** broke with tradition.

The first Japanese book edition was in a format closer in dimension to the magazine size (about the height and width of one of our comic books) and contained 360 pages. The title and author's name appeared on the cover in English; no Japanese lettering was used. The format and style grew out of Otomo's own concept of making the book edition similar in feeling to American comics. Book designer **Akira Saito** worked closely with Otomo to achieve this goal. Initial fears from Kodansha's Sales Division over the wisdom of the design and packaging of the book faded as advance orders began to pour in. What was originally slated to be a 30,000 print run eventually shot up to nearly 300,000 copies. The first book edition of **Akira** became a number one bestseller.

That was in September of 1984. Three other volumes have come out each year since then. All have had the same sort of phenomenal reception. The fifth volume is complete, and will shortly see print. With print runs now at about half a million copies each, the completed saga of **Akira** will have a total of two and a half million copies in print.

And that's not really the end.

Otomo, in addition to his comics work, is a designer of TV commercials for clients such as Suntory, Canon, and Honda, and acted as director, scenarist, designer, and illustrator on an animated film of **Akira** that has been playing the United States this year.

Otomo has also been very involved in the production of the English language version of **Akira** since this is the first time that his work has appeared in the United States in translation and also the first time it has appeared completely in color. His own studio, **MASH ROOM Co., Ltd.**, prepares the adjusted artwork from which we reproduce (Japanese comics are originally done to read from right to left and their dialogue balloons and sound effects are designed for lettering that reads vertically). Through Kodansha's editors in New York and Tokyo with whom we work, Otomo sees the material at each stage of development, providing notes on the script adaptation by **Jo Duffy** and furnishing color guides to **Steve Oliff**, who was his personal choice for colorist on the project.

This concern for all phases in the production of his work is certainly one of the factors in making **Akira** the phenomenon that it was for Japanese readers. The other factors are surely the artistry and excitement that is brought to the telling of the story. Now, thanks to **Katsuhiro Otomo** and **Kodansha, Ltd.**, American readers can at long last share in that phenomenon.

KATSUHIRO OTOMO

writer/illustrator

YASUMITSU SUETAKE

chief assistant to Mr. Otomo

MAKOTO SHIOSAKI

SATOSHI TAKABATAKE

assistants to Mr. Otomo

HIROSHI HIRATA

designer, AKIRA caligraph

AKIRA SAITO

designer, Kodansha edition

Kodansha Ltd.

YOKO UMEZAWA

with **LINDA M. YORK**

translation

KOICHI YURI

editor, Kodansha edition

NORIYUKI OKAZAKI

YUKA ANDO

editorial coordinators

Epic Comics

JO DUFFY

english adaptation

STEVE OLIFF

colorist

MICHAEL HIGGINS

letterer

HECTOR COLLAZO

VINCE EVANS

ROBERT CAROSELLA

production

MARK CHIARELLO

editorial assistant, Epic edition

ARCHIE GOODWIN

editor, Epic edition

The Third World War began in 1992 with the explosion of a new type bomb over Japan. Thirty-eight years later, the world is at last recovering. But in Neo-Tokyo, near ground zero of the original destruction, a strange encounter takes place. Kaneda—young, restless, committed to defying authority—nearly runs down a child with his motorcycle. A child with the wizened face of an old man. A child with powers beyond physical science. The child is Number 26. He is the harbinger of deadly events that sweep Kaneda into a struggle between powerful and secret forces. At the center of this struggle is something feared and prized for the potential to shake the recovering world. Someone or something known only as... AKIRA.

KATSUHIRO OTOMO'S

